

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KUWAIT 00561 01 OF 02 041256Z

50

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 CEA-01 COME-00

EB-07 FRB-03 IO-10 OPIC-03 TRSE-00 CIEP-01 LAB-04

SIL-01 OMB-01 FEAE-00 INT-05 SAM-01 SAB-01 SAJ-01

ACDA-05 SCA-01 AS-01 /129 W
----- 019364

R 041145Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2142

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KUWAIT 00561 01 OF 02 041256Z

USCINCEUR

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 0561

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KU

SUBJ: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF KUWAIT - AN ERA OF
RAPID CHANGE

REF: KUWAIT 0546

SUMMARY: THE FOLLOWING IS SECOND IN A SERIES OF CABLES ASSESSING THE LIKELY FUTURE DIRECTION OF US/KUWAITI RELATIONS AND DISCUSSING THE FACTORS THAT WILL INFLUENCE THEM. KUWAIT SOCIETY AND, BY EXTENSION, ITS GOVERNMENT ARE IN AN ERA OF RAPID CHANGE. PRIME ISSUES THAT WILL BRING ABOUT THESE CHANGES ARE INCREASED RIGHTS FOR WOMEN, LIBERALIZATION OF THE CITIZENSHIP LAW, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MEANINGFUL SOCIAL/POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MILITARY. THE 1975 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, AND THE FORCE OF DEMOCRACY THEY BROUGHT HOME, IS INDICATIVE OF THE TREND. THE RESULT OVER THE NEXT DECADE WILL BE THE PROGRESSIVE DEMISE OF THE EXISTING PATERNALISTIC/TRIBAL STRUCTURE AND ITS REPLACEMENT BY A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IN WHICH THE PRESENT RULING FAMILY WILL BECOME MORE OF A FIGUREHEAD. WE WILL GRADUALLY SEE NEW NAMES, A NEW NATIONALISM AND A NEW SOCIO/POLITICAL STRUCTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. KUWAIT SOCIETY AND, BY EXTENSION, ITS GOVERNMENT ARE IN AN ERA OF RAPID CHANGE. TRADITIONS DIE HARD IN THE ARAB WORLD, AND THE TRIBAL/FAMILY STRUCTURE, WHICH CHARACTERIZES KUWAITI SOCIETY, IS NO EXCEPTION. AT THIS STATE, A MAN IS WHO HE IS AND WHERE HE IS BECAUSE HE COMES FROM A CERTAIN FAMILY OR TRIBE. OVER HALF OF THE SEATS IN THE FIFTY SEAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ARE TRIBAL ('AJMAN, 'AWAZIM, 'UTAYBAH, 'ANAYZAH, MUTAYR AND BANI KHALID) AND HALF OF THE REMAINDER ARE FAMILY SEATS. A LOOK AT KEY POSITIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT SHOWS AN INORDINATE NUMBER OF OLD ESTABLISHED FAMILY NAMES: HAMADS, SAQRS, BAHARS, GHANIMS, ETC.

2. AT THE TOP OF THE TRIBAL/FAMILY SOCIETY IN KUWAIT IS THE RULING FAMILY OF AL-SABAH. THE SABAHS ARE A FAMILY RATHER THAN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KUWAIT 00561 01 OF 02 041256Z

A TRIBE, ALTHOUGH THEIR PRACTICE OF MARRYING WOMEN OF THE KEY TRIBES HAS TRIBAL OVERTONES. BY LAW, ONLY THE DESCENDENTS OF MUBARAK AL-SABAH ARE ELIGIBLE TO RULE, AND BY TRADITION ONLY THE DESCENDENTS OF HIS SONS, JABIR AND SALIM MAY BECOME AMIR. MUBARAK'S DESCENDENTS USUALLY GET THE KEY GOVERNMENT JOBS, SUCH AS MINISTRIES, GOVERNORSHIPS AND SECURITY-INTELLIGENCE POSITIONS. OTHER SABAHS GET POSITIONS IN THE ARMY OR LESSER POSITIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT. IN ADDITION, SOME ARE BUSINESSMEN, ALTHOUGH THIS

IS A RECENT DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE THE FAMILY, IN THE PAST, DID NOT WANT TO COMPETE WITH THE LARGE POWERFUL MERCHANT FAMILIES.

3. THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF KUWAITI SOCIETY, THEN, HAS AT THE TOP THE SABAHS, FOLLOWED ON THE SECOND LEVEL BY THE KEY NON-TRIBAL MERCHANT FAMILIES, AND THE SHAIKHLI CLANS OF THE KEY TRIBES ON THE THIRD LEVEL. NEXT COME THE MEMBERS OF THE KEY TRIBES, FOLLOWED BY THE LESSER TRIBES AND SMALL MERCHANT FAMILIES. NEXT ARE THE NON-TRIBAL SALUBBAH PEOPLE, WHO WERE THE CRAFTSMEN ATTACHED TO THE TRIBES, AND EX-SLAVES. AT THE LOWEST LEVEL, ALTHOUGH THEY HOLD MANY KEY POSITIONS, ARE THE NATURALIZED KUWAITIS. THEY ARE CONSIDERED SECOND CLASS CITIZENS AND MAY NOT VOTE OR RUN FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE.

4. OUTSIDE OF "KUWAITI SOCIETY" IS THE EX-PATRIATE COMMUNITY, WHICH CONSTITUTES PERHAPS 60 PERCENT OF KUWAIT'S POPULATION OF ABOUT 900,000. MANY OF THESE INDIVIDUALS ALSO HOLD KEY GOVERNMENTAL POSITIONS AND POSITIONS OF IMPORTANCE AND TRUST IN THE COMMERCIAL FIELD. ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE MANY OF THE BENEFITS OF KUWAITI CITIZENSHIP, THEY ARE STILL OUTSIDERS LOOKING IN, WHO KNOW THAT THEIR WORK AND RESIDENCE PERMITS MAY BE WITHDRAWN AT ANY TIME.

5. THIS STRUCTURE HAS WITNESSED LITTLE CHANGE IN THE FIRST 14 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE. IN THE COMING FEW YEARS THERE WILL BE RAPID CHANGE. AS NEW SOCIAL/POLITICAL CONDITIONS PERMIT MORE VERTICAL MOBILITY, THE SABAHS, AT LEAST, WILL LOSE SOME OF THEIR POSITION. THE ISSUES THAT WILL BRING ABOUT THESE CHANGES WILL BE INCREASED RIGHTS FOR WOMEN, LIBERALIZATION OF THE CITIZENSHIP LAW, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MEANINGFUL SOCIAL/POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MILITARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KUWAIT 00561 02 OF 02 041329Z

50

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 CEA-01 COME-00

EB-07 FRB-03 IO-10 OPIC-03 TRSE-00 CIEP-01 LAB-04

SIL-01 OMB-01 FEAE-00 INT-05 SAM-01 SAB-01 SAJ-01

ACDA-05 SCA-01 AS-01 /129 W
----- 019744

R 041145Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2143
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANAA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION USUN
USMISSION OECD PARIS
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KUWAIT 00561 02 OF 02 041329Z

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUWAIT 0561

6. THE 1975 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, AND THE CAMPAIGNING PRECEDING THEM, BROUGHT TO PUBLIC ATTENTION THE RATHER CRUDE TRADITIONAL GOVERNMENT TACTICS FOR INFLUENCING THE RESULTS AND, MORE IMPORTANT, ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF BASIC CONCERN TO THE PEOPLE. THE LIBERALS HAD HOPED THE ELECTIONS WOULD RESULT IN A TRULY MEANINGFUL LEGISLATIVE BODY, COMPOSED OF EDUCATED MEN. AS THE CAMPAIGN PROGRESSED, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE ASSEMBLY WOULD, ONCE AGAIN, BE DOMINATED BY CONSERVATIVE, TRIBAL PRO-GOVERNMENT MEN. TRIBAL LISTS, VOTER REGISTRATION IRREGULARITIES AND CASH PAYMENTS WERE ALL TOO OBVIOUS. THE EDUCATED WOMAN WAS AGAIN UNABLE TO VOTE, ALTHOUGH, IN MANY CASES, SHE WAS MORE QUALIFIED THAN HER MALE COUNTERPART. CERTAINLY SHE WAS MORE QUALIFIED TO VOTE ON CURRENT ISSUES THAN THE TRIBESMAN. THE BAN ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES BY LABOR, ALSO

CUT OUT POSSIBLE PRESSURE GROUP ACTIVITY. THE ELECTIONS THIS YEAR
THUS WERE ONE CATALYST FOR CHANGE.

7. THE FINAL ELECTION RESULTS SHOW THERE ARE 29 CONSERVATIVE PRO-
GOVERNMENT DEPUTIES AND FIVE LIBERAL DEPUTIES WITH PRO-GOVERNMENT
INCLINATION. OF THE 16 REMAINING SEATS, 12 ARE LIBERAL INDEPENDENTS,
AND FOUR ARE ANTI-GOVERNMENT LEFTISTS. THE LIBERALS, WHO CAPTURED
LEFTIST AND CONSERVATIVE SEATS, WILL DEMAND SOCIAL REFORMS. WOMEN
MUST BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE. LABOR UNIONS MUST BE GIVEN COL-
LECTIVE BARGAINING AND STRIKE RIGHTS. POLITICAL PARTIES MUST BE
MADE LEGAL. THE LIBERAL ARGUMENT ON THIS LAST POINT IS THAT IF
PARTIES ARE LEGAL THEN ILLEGAL GROUPINGS CAN BE DEALT WITH AND THOSE
GROUPS THAT ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT MUST DO SO IN OPEN DEBATE. IN
TERMS OF SECURITY THIS MAKES SENSE. SHOULD THE GOK NOT BACK
LIBERAL SOCIAL LEGISLATION IT WILL HASTEN RADICAL POLITICAL
ACTIVITIES.

IN ADDITION, AS MORE EDUCATED KUWAITIS RETURN TO KUWAIT THEY WILL
DEMAND, AND GET, MORE OF A VOICE IN GOVERNMENT.

8. ANOTHER CATALYST OF CHANGE, AND ONE OF THE MOST DYNAMIC OF
THE NEW FORCES, IS THE MILITARY. A LARGE NUMBER OF KUWAITIS
HAVE IN RECENT YEARS SERVED IN SYRIA AND EGYPT, WHERE THE
SOLDIER IS NOT ONLY RESPECTED, BUT ALSO PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KUWAIT 00561 02 OF 02 041329Z

GOVERNMENT.

FYI. KUWAITI MILITARY ARE NOT ALLOWED TO VOTE OR HOLD
PUBLIC OFFICE. END FYI. MOREOVER, THE KUWAITI SOLDIER IS NOW
RECEIVING NEW SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT AND IS BEING TRAINED ABROAD
BY MEN WHO HAVE TREMENDOUS PRIDE IN THEIR SERVICE. THESE NEW
"HOT SHOTS" WILL NOT BE CONTENT TO SIT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY
AND WATCH THE RICH YOUNG KUWAITIS DRIVE THEIR SPORTS CARS. THEY
WILL WANT AN INCREASING PIECE OF THE "ACTION" - HIGHER SALARIES,
BETTER BENEFITS AND MORE OF A VOICE IN POLICY. THE TRADITION OF
THE MILITARY IN POLITICS IN THE ARAB WORLD WILL NOT, FOR LONG, BY-
PASS KUWAIT.

9. THE FINAL FACTOR WHICH DEEPLY INFLUENCES THE SOCIO-POLITICAL
STRUCTURE OF KUWAIT IS THAT THIS IS A CITY-STATE. KUWAIT IS SMALL
AND COMPACT; AND IN SUCH A CLOSELY KNIT SOCIETY MOST PEOPLE ARE
RELATED SOMEHOW TO EACH OTHER AND CERTAINLY EVERYONE KNOWS
WHAT EVERY OTHER PERSON IS DOING. DEVELOPMENT TENDS TO TAKE
PLACE MUCH MORE RAPIDLY IN SUCH A SITUATION SIMPLY BECAUSE THE
RIPPLES OF CHANGE ARE CONFINED AND NOT EASILY DISSIPATED. ANY-
THING ATTRACTIVE THAT IS INTRODUCED SPREADS RAPIDLY, WHETHER IT
IS A NEW LUXURY ITEM OR A NEW POLITICAL IDEA. TO DATE THE RIPPLES
HAVE BEEN FEW BUT AS THE FACTORS OUTLINED ABOVE COALESCE, CHANGE
WILL COME MORE RAPIDLY. IT WILL NOT BE LONG NOW BEFORE WHAT
A MAN SAYS AND IS ABLE TO DO WILL BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHO
HE IS.

10. NOT FAR OFF, THEREFORE, IS THE DEMISE OF THE PATERNALISTIC/
TRIBAL STRUCTURE AND ITS REPLACEMENT BY A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
SYSTEM IN WHICH THE RULING FAMILY WILL BECOME MORE OF A FIGURE-
HEAD. WE WILLSEE NEW NAMES, A NEW NATIONALISM AND A NEW SOCIO/
POLITICAL STRUCTURE.
STOLTZFUS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL PARTIES, SOCIAL CHANGE, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975KUWAIT00561
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750040-0441
From: KUWAIT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750275/aaaacpex.tel
Line Count: 284
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 KUWAIT 0546
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 APR 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <17 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF KUWAIT - AN ERA OF RAPID CHANGE
TAGS: PINT, KU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006